

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJ: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER - ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND DRUG
TRADE

FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN NASSAU TRIBUNE ON MAY 6.
EMBASSY COMMENTS FOLLOW IN SEPTTEL.

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND THE DRUG TRAFFIC THROUGH
BAHAMIAN WATERS IMPOSE "GREAT BURDENS ON THE BAHAMIAN
ECONOMY BY BITING GREEDILY INTO ITS LIMITED RESOURCES,"
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ARTHUR HANNA TOLD THE BOARD OF
GOVERNORS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
MEETING IN VANCOUVER RECENTLY.

MR. HANNA CALLED ON "THOSE COUNTRIES WHERE THESE SHIP-
MENTS ORIGINATE" TO DO MORE "TO CONTROL AND DISCOURAGE THESE
ACTIVITIES."

MR. HANNA, AS GOVERNOR OF THE DEVELOPMENT BANK FOR THE
BAHAMAS, WAS SPEAKING FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE 19TH ANNUAL
MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK ON APRIL 18.

MR. HANNA SAID THAT THE EFFECT OF THE "UNCONTROLLED
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INFLOW OF IMMIGRANTS INTO THE COUNTRY ARE MANY, BUT THE
FOLLOWING ARE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT WHIHHAVE CLEARLY AND VISIBLY
CREATED PROBLEMS WITHIN THE BAHAMIAN ECONOMY."

"FIRSTLY" HE SAID, "IT DISPLACES BAHAMIAN WORKERS IN
THE LABOUR MARKET BECAUSE OF THE WILLINGNESS OF THE IMMIGRANT
WORKER TO ACCEPT WAGE LEVELS AND WORKING CONDITIONS WHICH ARE
UNACCEPTABLE TO THE BAHAMIAN. THERE IS INCREASING CONCERN

AS THE COUNTRY'S UNEMPLOYMENT LEVEL, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUTH, SOARS AND SHOWS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF DECLINING.

"SECONDLY, IT IMPOSES HEAVY DEMANDS ON ALREADY OVER-BURDENED HEALTH-CARE, LAW ENFORCEMENT AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES. IT CREATES ADDITIONAL COSTS WHICH THE BAHAMAS IS FORCED TO BEAR, CAN ILL-AFFORD AND HAS NO RECOURSE FOR REIMBURSEMENT. SUCH COSTS ABSORBED SCARCE FUNDS DESPERATELY NEEDED FOR IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT IN OTHER AREAS. SUBSTANTIAL SUMS MUST ALSO BE SPENT ON APPREHENSION, DETENTION AND REPATRIATION.

"DESPITE THE ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC BURDENS CREATED BY THIS PROBLEM, BUT REALISING THAT THE UNIVERSAL MOTIVATION FOR SUCH MIGRATION IS THE DESIRE FOR ECONOMIC BETTERMENT, WE HAVE ENDEAVORED TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM IN THE MOST HUMANE MANNER POSSIBLE AS WE ARE FIRM BELIEVERS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE INTEGRITY OF MANKIND," MR. HANNA SAID.

"THIRDLY," HE CONTINUED, "IT INCREASES THE WORK PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, WHICH MUST BE ALWAYS ON THE LOOKOUT FOR, AND PROVIDE PROTECTION AGAINST, THE POSSIBLE VICTIMIZATION, EXPLOITATION AND INHUMANE TREATMENT BY SOMETIMES UNSCRUPULOUS EMPLOYERS, LANDLORDS AND OTHERS BECAUSE OF THE LIMITATION IMPOSED BY THE STATUS OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS.

"WITH THE DRUG TRAFFIC SITUATION - AS OPPOSED TO THE PROBLEM OF THE UNDOCUMENTED ALIEN - THE BAHAMAS IS NOT PRIMARILY THE MARKET DESTINATION, BUT HAS BECOME AN UNFORTUNATE VICTIM BECAUSE OF ITS GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION AND UNCLASSIFIED

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ITS PROXIMITY TO NORTH AMERICA," MR. HANNA SAID.

"THOUSANDS OF TONS OF THE ILLEGAL COMMODITY INTENDED FOR OTHER DESTINATIONS, ARE APPREHENDED IN THE BAHAMAS AND WHILE MARKET VALUES HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THE HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS THE COST TO THE BAHAMAS IN TERMS OF REAL DOLLARS AS WELL AS THE HARM IT DOES IN TERMS OF MORAL POLLUTION AND DECADENCE IS SUBSTANTIAL.

"THE BAHAMAS LOOKS UNKINDLY UPON THIS TRAFFIC IN ILLEGAL DRUGS THROUGH ITS WATERS BY OTHER COUNTRIES, AND CONSIDERS SUCH ACTION TO BE IN VIOLATION OF ITS NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY AND AFFRONT TO ITS MORAL INTEGRITY. THOSE COUNTRIES WHENCE THESE SHIPMENTS ORIGINATE MUST DO MORE TO CONTROL AND DISCOURAGE THESE ACTIVITIES.

"I KNOW" HE SAID, "THAT THE COUNTRIES INVOLVED, AND THEIR GOVERNMENTS, ARE RESPECTABLE AND HONEST AND I FEEL THAT SO LONG AS THEY ARE MADE AWARE OF THE HARDSHIPS SUCH OPERATIONS ARE INFLECTING UPON THEIR NON-INVOLVED, FRIENDLY AND PEACE LOVING NEIGHBOURS SUCH AS THE BAHAMAS, THEY WILL TAKE SPEEDY AND EFFECTIVE ACTION TO STEM IT.

"ONE MIGHT SUGGEST THAT SINCE APPREHENSION OF SUCH CARGOES AND THE PROCESSING OF SUCH INCIDENTS ARE COSTING THE BAHAMAS SO MUCH, WE SHOULD JUST CLOSE OUR EYES, PRETEND THAT NO VIO-

LATION IS OCCURRING AND LET SUCH VESSELS PLY ON TO THEIR INTENDED DESTINATIONS. WE FEEL THAT IF WE WERE TO DO THIS, IT WOULD BE NOTHING SHORT OF A BETRAYAL OF OUR NATION'S TRUST.

"THUS, BEFORE WE COMPROMISE OUR PRINCIPLES WE PREFER TO REMAIN VICTIMS - THE UNFORTUNATE. THE NET EFFECT THIS ACTIVITY HAS ON OUR ECONOMY IS DEFINITELY A NEGATIVE ONE. NEVERTHELESS, THE BAHAMAS IS CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS EXTREMELY COSTLY SITUATION OVER WHICH IT HAS NO CHOICE NOR DECISION. IF I CAN INFER (AND I SUBJECT MYSELF TO CORRECTION) THAT THOSE COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE DRUG TRADE, FROM THE PRODUCTION SIDE, ARE TRAPPED INTO A SOCIO-ECONOMIC VICIOUS CIRCLE OF DEPRIVEMENT, THEN WE SHOULD ALL FEEL MORALLY OBLIGATED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

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